

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Weavexx Corp

North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Weavexx Applies Lean To Battle Competition

Client Profile:

Weavexx is a supplier of paper machine clothing (the extensive woven belts on which paper is processed) to the paper industry. The company has 200 employees at its Wake Forest, North Carolina plant.

Situation:

Although there are only three other major players in the paper machine clothing industry, the competition among them is stiff. Weavexx wanted to gain the competitive advantage by improving productivity in all six of its manufacturing facilities across the U.S. and Canada. Boyd Taylor, Vice President of Operations at Weavexx, called on the Industrial Extension Service (IES) of North Carolina State University, a NIST MEP affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

In August 2001, IES manufacturing specialists toured the Wake Forest plant alongside Weavexx managers, and all agreed that yarn handling and storage needed immediate attention. Operators spent too much time waiting for yarn to be brought to the production area from the warehouse, and potential mistakes, such as pulling the wrong yarn from the warehouse, caused product defects. With price points in the tens of thousands of dollars for these fabrics, errors produce staggering losses for the company.

In order to reduce waiting time and defects, IES led a three-day rapid improvement event designed to spur an ongoing continuous improvement effort. During the three days, Weavexx reorganized the yarn warehouse, modified its inventory paperwork system, and created point-of-use storage areas at the looms to reduce yarn handling and traveling time from the warehouse.

Weavexx, impressed by the results of lean implementation, decided that all Weavexx employees should be educated in lean principles. IES, in partnership with Wake Tech Community College, led an initial lean workshop for plant managers and staff from all five Weavexx plants across North America. Training focused on the Wake Forest plant, and by the end of December IES had trained all 200 Wake Forest employees.

Results:

Decreased time spent by supervisors looking for yarn.
Increased production time.

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Improved accuracy of inventory counts.
Reduced product defects by 100 percent.
Estimating a savings of \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year as a result of the three-day improvement event.

Testimonial:

"The relationship between the Industrial Extension Service and Weavexx will have a long-term impact on our business....With over 20 years in manufacturing, this is the best all-around training that I have seen."

Boyd Taylor, Vice President of Operations